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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, and Mr. E. J. Rowell, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, broadcast Thursday, January 27, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associated radio stations.

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MR. KADDERLY:

Thank you Everett Mitchell. Here we are in Washington. And Ruth Van Deman and E. J. Rowell are ready to give you another of their joint reports on food. Some of you perhaps heard their apple report last October. Well, they're going to salute the onion now. And true to their regular custom, Miss Van Deman and Mr. Rowell have brought along the real thing. The table here has onions all over it. Big onions --- little onions --- white, green, and yellow onions --- but what, no RED onions? Well, anyway, many onions - including a green onion corsage that Miss Van Deman is wearing by request. And right in the center is a beautiful platter of ---

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Wait, Mr. Kadderly, wait ---

MR. KADDERLY:

Oh, I didn't mean to spill the beans ---

MISS VAN DEMAN:

(Or let the onions out of the bag.)

MR. KADDERLY:

I thought everything here was on the record.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Certainly it is. But Mr. Rowell's market news comes first.

MR. KADDERLY:

Very well, Mike. How is the onion market?

MR. ROWELL:

Firm and fairly steady. That is, wholesale prices. Onions have been going up steadily for the last month.

MR. KADDERLY:

More than this time last year?

MR. ROWELL:

Decidedly. In some places onions are selling wholesale for twice as much as they did a year ago.

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN:

But they're reasonable in the retail stores.

MR. ROWELL:

Oh, sure. We have plenty of onions and the price to the consumer is moderate. The 1937 crop was well above the 5-year average - between 14 and 15 million 100-pound bags, which is the way the Government keeps its figures on onions. Farmers generally sell their onions in 50-pound bags.

MR. KADDERLY:

Well, leaving out the bags, that means about a billion 500 million pounds of onions.

MR. ROWELL:

Roughly, yes. But the 1936 crop was even larger. That year we had a total of over a billion, 700 million pounds.

MR. KADDERLY:

Some onions! Then the smaller crop this year explains the price differential.

MR. ROWELL:

Right. The onion market is a very good example of the way the law of supply and demand works on prices. We Americans seem to eat just about the same quantity of onions year after year.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

About 10 pounds apiece, I believe.

MR. ROWELL:

That's right. About 10 pounds per capita. So with that fairly constant demand, when the crop falls off two or three hundred million pounds, the price of onions begins to climb. And when there's a surplus, the price drops just as sharply.

MR. KADDERLY:

The exports and imports I suppose don't count for much.

MR. ROWELL:

Not compared with the domestic crop.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Mr. Rowell, you spoke about 50-pound sacks ---

MR. ROWELL:

--- the growers use ---

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Lately I've noticed onions in small bags in the grocery stores.

MR. ROWELL:

Yes, the 10-pound mesh bag is getting to be a very common retail package for onions. I bought these yellow ones here in a 10 pound sack.

MR. KADDERLY:

Now we're really getting down to onions. Is this a Yellow Globe, I have here in my hand, Mike?

MR. ROWELL:

Globe or semi-globe - some member of that tribe. There are a whole raft of 'em - Yellow Globe Danvers, Ohio Yellow Globe, Michigan Yellow Globe----. Most of the Globes are yellow skinned, but there are a few whites. All the globe onions are pretty full of pep, wouldn't you say, Ruth?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Pungent, that's the word.

MR. KADDERLY:

No, strong is the word!

MISS VAN DEMAN:

It all depends on how well you like onions. One or two of those Yellow Globes will liven up a lamb stew or a kettle of soup ---

MR. ROWELL:

I'll say it will.

MR. KADDERLY:

I'm partial to these big Spanish fellows here.

MR. ROWELL:

Valencias.

MR. KADDERLY:

We get a lot of them on the West Coast.

MR. ROWELL:

Yes, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, Colorado -- the Western States grow a lot of these big Valencias.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Which are just about perfect for creamed onions.

MR. ROWELL:

Now you are talking, Ruth. Creamed onions. Next to a hamburger sandwich, with a slice of onion bigger than the cake of hamburger, I think creamed onions --

MR. KADDERLY:

Aw - how about onion soup, Mike. Ruth, do you know how to make real onion soup?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

The French kind, you mean, with a slice of toast and grated cheese on top?

MR. KADDERLY:

That's it.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Certainly, that's not hard. I have the recipe right here.

MR. KADDERLY:

Let's see.

MR. ROWELL:

Before long now we'll be getting the new crop of these flat Bermuda-type onions from Texas.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

They're mild too.

MR. ROWELL:

But full of aroma. A thick slice of one of these big succulent Bermudas in a sandwich - Oh, boy --

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Wait, Mike, lunch isn't served yet.

MR. ROWELL:

Don't I know it.

MR. KADDERLY:

Ruth, these onion recipes are the real thing! This is onion soup. And here are buttered onions, creamed onions, onions au gratin, French fried onions, smothered steak with onions - must be you collected all the onion recipes there are.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Oh, no, those are just some of the ways our foods people have experimented with onions.

MR. KADDERLY:

Can we offer these recipes to our listeners?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Certainly, that's what I had them run off for.

MR. KADDERLY:

Fine. A dozen excellent onion recipes free for the asking.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Fifteen, to be exact, I think.

MR. KADDERLY:

Better yet. Fifteen onion recipes free for the asking. (Well, we'll come back to that later and tell just how to send for them.) Mike, any more statistics?

MR. ROWELL:

Not until next week. Then we'll know exactly how many onions are in storage. The figures will be released on the 29th, Saturday. And now, Ruth, may I help myself to one of these tweedle-dums here?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Surely. Pickled onions and cheese on toothpicks. How about you, Wallace?

MR. KADDERLY:

Thank you. If I can't have onion soup ---

MR. ROWELL:

This suits me - good strong onions - good strong cheese -

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Mike, you certainly are strong on onions.

MR. ROWELL:

Of course, why not?

MR. KADDERLY:

Ruth, what's the trick of keeping onions white like this when you pickle 'em?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Perfectly clear distilled vinegar, I believe. And these little pearl onions have to be handled so. These are a commercial product.

MR. KADDERLY:

Well, have you home economists discovered a way yet of cooking onions without getting the "aroma" through the house?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

I think it's better not to try. Onions will be onions. They get their flavor and "perfume" ---

MR. ROWELL:

(Perfume, that's right.)

MISS VAN DEMAN:

--- from some very powerful essential oils that are also volatile. And when you break the skin on onions and cut them up and cook them, these volatile oils begin to pass off into the air.

MR. KADDERLY:

And into the nose and eyes.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes. That's why it's better to peel onions under water unless you enjoy -----

MR. KADDERLY:

Onion tears.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, onion tears. Then when you cook onions, if you have a lid on the kettle it holds these strong substances in, and makes the flavor stronger and more oniony.

MR. KADDERLY:

Then you recommend cooking onions in an open pan?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

In general, yes. Of course there are always exceptions to every rule. But for onions, cabbage, turnips, and all the vegetables that have sulphur compounds in their make-up, it is better to give these strong substances a chance to escape. And these vegetables are best cooked until they're tender and no more. Overcooking has a very bad effect on them. It gives a rank flavor, and a flabby texture, and a dark color.

MR. KADDERLY:

You know, Ruth, I've heard that hard water, that is water with alkali in it, will turn white vegetables yellow.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

As they cook, you mean?

MR. KADDERLY:

Yes.-- I've heard many homemakers in the West talk about that.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's true. The alkali does have an effect on the so-called flavones in white onions and white cabbage and cauliflower. It turns them somewhat yellow. But that's just one of the things you have to put up with in the alkali country, I guess. It isn't like the dull brownish color that comes from overcooking white vegetables. That's a preventable sin against good vegetables.

MR. KADDERLY:

Preventable -- all too often committed.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, but I think we're getting to be better vegetable cooks all the time.

MR. KADDERLY:

As we get more vitamin conscious?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That probably has a lot to do with it.

MR. KADDERLY:

And that reminds me, Ruth, you haven't said a word yet about the vitamins in onions.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Can't we skip them this time, Wallace?

MR. KADDERLY:

Just as you say.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, maybe some day we'll discover a brand new vitamin in onions, you never can tell. But in the present line-up they don't rate very high. The green tops of these spring onions here probably have vitamin A, but they've been mostly trimmed off.

MR. KADDERLY:

Then it's chiefly flavor we get when we eat onions.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, the onion is the great seasoner. And, by the way, that phrase "Cook the chopped onion in fat until the onion turns yellow," which runs through cookbooks like a theme song, has reason behind it. Cooking the onion in fat that way before adding it to a stuffing or a stew makes the onion flavor blend better with the other foods. But don't try to brown the onion. That's difficult to do without driving off too much of the aromatic oils.

MR. KADDERLY:

Ruth, what do you think about a rub of onion, or garlic, around the salad bowl?

MR. ROWELL:

(Now you're talking my language again.)

MISS VAN DEMAN:

"Let onion atoms dwell within the bowl

And, scarce suspected, animate the whole."

That was part of Sydney Smith's "Recipe for Salad Dressing", you know.

MR. KADDERLY:

No, I didn't know. But I like it.

MR. ROWELL:

Well, I'll just take one of these "rare ripes" here, with a little salt.

MR. KADDERLY:

Rare ripes?

MR. ROWELL:

Yes, that's the old New England name for spring onions.

MR. KADDERLY:

Well, thank you, Mike Rowell and thank you Ruth Van Deman for all this illustrated news about onions.---

And now I'll repeat that offer of the Onion Recipes. If your family likes onions, or maybe if you're trying to teach them to like onions, and you want 15 good recipes send a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Just write Onion Recipes on it with your own name and address and drop it in the mail. And the Bureau of Home Economics will send you Onion Recipes.

